

LOIS CAPPS
24TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

2231 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0524
(202) 225-3601
www.capps.house.gov

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 3, 2015

DISTRICT OFFICES:

- ☐ 1411 MARSH STREET, SUITE 205
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401
(805) 546-8348
- ☐ 301 EAST CARRILLO STREET, SUITE A
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101
(805) 730-1710
- ☐ 1101 SOUTH BROADWAY, SUITE A
SANTA MARIA, CA 93454
(805) 349-3832

Chairman Fred Upton
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone:

In light of the recent crude oil pipeline rupture and spill along the Gaviota Coast in California, I write to urge the House Energy and Commerce Committee to hold a field hearing in my district to examine the causes of and response to this spill and the adequacy of current federal spill detection and prevention regulations. My constituents, and so many others who have endured similar spills in recent years, deserve answers as to what caused this most recent spill, if it could have been prevented, and what more could have been done to mitigate the damage.

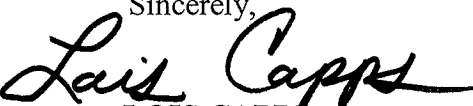
On May 19, 2015, Line 901 of the Plains All American Pipeline ruptured, spilling over 100,000 gallons of heavy crude oil along the Gaviota Coast, one of the most diverse and unique wildlife habitats in North America. Much of this oil flowed into the Pacific Ocean and spread for miles along the coast, polluting beaches with oil, closing commercial fisheries, and shutting down recreation opportunities throughout the region.

Our community has experienced devastating oil spills in the past, most notably in 1969 when more than 4 million gallons of crude oil spilled into our ocean and onto our beaches from Union Oil's Platform A. Progress has been made since then to improve oil transportation safety and spill detection technologies, however these technologies are not being used on the Plains All American Pipeline.

While the exact causes of this spill are still being investigated, this incident highlights the inadequate oversight provided by the pipeline's federal regulator, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). The agency continues to drag its feet on congressionally-directed actions required by the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-90), a version of which passed through our committee on a bipartisan basis.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee has jurisdiction on these issues and a history of working in a bipartisan manner on pipeline safety legislation. The Plains Oil Spill is a tragedy, but one that we can and must learn from, particularly as we begin to consider the reauthorization of federal pipeline safety programs later this year. A hearing on this incident is an essential step in this effort. I formally request that you schedule this hearing as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress